Supreme Court, U.S.
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No. ___

IN THE

Supreme Court of the United States

BECKY M. LITOWITZ,
Petitioner,

v.

DAVID J. LITOWITZ,
Respondent.

Petition for Motion for Reconsideration to the Supreme Court of the State of Washington

---

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED FOR REVIEW

In view of the fundamental right to self determination, can cryogenically preserved human embryos be deemed "property" under the United States Constitution?

Can a non-biologically related person have a constitutionally protected interest in a preserved human embryo?

PARTIES

Petitioner is Becky Litowitz. Respondent is David Litowitz.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
QUESTIONS PRESENTED FOR REVIEW	i
PARTIES	ii
TABLE OF AUTHORITIES	iv
CITATIONS TO OPINIONS AND ORDERS ENTERED IN CASE	1
STATEMENT OF JURISDICTIONAL BASIS	1
CONSTITUTIONAL AND OTHER PROVISIONS INVOLVED IN THIS CASE	2
STATEMENT OF THE CASE	2
ARGUMENT FOR REVIEW	4
I. THERE IS DIVISION AMONG SEVERAL STATES AS TO THE LEGAL STATUS OF HUMAN EMBRYOS	4
II. PUBLIC POLICY REQUIRES CLEAR DEFINITIONS OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A "PARENT" OR "INTENDED PARENT"	8
CONCLUSION	11

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

CASES	Page
A.Z. v. B.Z., 431 Mass. 150, 725 N.E.2d 1051, 1056-1058(Mass. 2000)	6
Davis v. Davis, 842 S.W.2d 588, 598-602 (Tn. 1992)	5, 7
Doe v. Irwin, 441 F.Supp. 1247 (Mich., 1985)	9
Duchesne v. Sugarman, 566 F.2d 817, 825 (2d.Cir., 1977)	9
Franz v. United States, 707 F.2d 582, fns. 53-57 (D.C. Cir., 1983)	9
Griswold v. Connecticut, 381 U.S. 479	8
Hecht v. Superior Court, 16 Cal.App.4th 836, 20 Cal.Rptr.2d 275 (1993), *review denied*	6
In the Interest of Cooper, 230 Kan. 57, 631 P.2d 632 (Kan., 1981)	9
Johnson v. Calvert, 5 Cal.4th 84, 851 P.2d. 776 (1993)	6
Kass v. Kass, 91 N.Y.2d 554, 564-565, 696 N.E.2d 174 (1998)	5, 6, 7, 9, 10
Meyer v. Nebraska, 262 U.S. 390, 399 (1923)	9
Moore v. Regents of the University of California, 51 C.3d. 120, 136-137, 271 Cal.Rptr. 146 (1990)	6
Parham v. J.R., 442 U.S. 584, 602 (1979)	8, 9
Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pa. v. Casey, 505 U.S. 833 (1992)	5, 7
Prince v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 321 U.S. 158, 166 (1943)	8, 9
Quilloin v. Walcott, 434 U.S. 246, 255 (1978)	9
Santosky v. Kramer, 455 U.S. 745, 753 (1982)	8, 9
Skinner v. Oklahoma, 316 U.S. 535, 541 (1942)	9
Stanley v. Illinois, 405 U.S. 645, 651 (1972)	8, 9
Washington v. Glucksberg, 521 U.S. 702, 720 (1997)	9

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES—Continued

	Page
Wisconsin v. Yoder, 406 U.S. 205, 232-33 (1972)	9
York v. Jones, 717 F.Supp. 421, 423-425, 58 USLW 2083 (E.D. Va. 1989)	6
CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS	
United States Constitution—First Amendment	2, 9
United States Constitution—Fifth Amendment	9
United States Constitution—Ninth Amendment	2, 9
United States Constitution—Fourteenth Amendment	2, 9
STATUTES	
28 U.S.C. § 1257(a)	1
MISCELLANEOUS	
Ellis, Matthew, *In Vitro Fertilization and Consent Agreements: Where Does California Stand?*, 42 Santa Clara L.Rev. 1191, 1192 (2002)	5
Fischer, Judith D., *Misappropriation of Human Eggs and Embryos and the Tort of Conversion: A Relational View*, 32 Loy. L.A. L.Rev. 381 (1999)	6
Lyon, Kate W., *Babies on Ice: The Legal Status of Frozen Embryos Involved in Custody Disputes During Divorce*, 21 Whittier L.Rev. 695, fn. 4 (2000)	7

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PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

CITATIONS TO OPINIONS AND ORDERS ENTERED IN CASE

The judgment of the Washington Supreme Court, the order denying rehearing, and modification of the opinion of the Washington Supreme Court appear in the Appendix hereto.

STATEMENT OF JURISDICTIONAL BASIS

This case arises from a judgment entered by the highest court of the State of Washington. Thus, 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a) confers jurisdiction on this Court.

This Petition is filed following entry of an order denying rehearing of the case before the Washington Supreme Court. The order denying rehearing was entered on September 12, 2002.

United States Supreme Court Rule 13(3) allows Petitioner until December 12, 2002, to file this petition.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND OTHER PROVISIONS INVOLVED IN THIS CASE

This case implicates the First, Ninth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution.

The First Amendment states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

The Ninth Amendment states: "The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people."

The Fourteenth Amendment states, in relevant part: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

With the advent of human cloning, the proliferation of legally recognized same-sex relationships, and the fact that nearly two hundred thousand human embryos are in cryogenic preservation, throughout the United States, there

are compelling reasons for granting review. The legal status of embryos currently conflicts with this Court's reproductive rights jurisprudence, and the states have not assisted in clarifying the issues surrounding the decision to start a family through 'artificial means.' The constitutional definition of the term "parent" is unconstitutionally vague and ambiguous, given the current state of the law.

On or about July 15, 1980, Petitioner Becky Litowitz was rendered infertile and medically incapable of carrying children.

In March of 1996, as a result of desiring to be a parent, Petitioner and her then husband, David Litowitz, entered into the *in vitro* fertilization (hereinafter referred to as "IVF") contracts that are the subject matter of this petition for review. The contracts were entered into in the State of California. The couple lived in the State of Washington at all relevant times.

Under the terms of the first contract, Mr. Litowitz' sperm would be, and was, used to fertilize human ova donated by one J.Y. (egg donor), with the consent of one E.Y. (husband of egg donor). The California IVF contract was entered into on or about March 21, 1996.

As a result of the parties' performance on the IVF contract, five genetically unique human embryos were created, and lawfully adopted by Petitioner and her husband. The embryos are, and were, genetically distinct from their progenitors and all other human beings.

Three of the Litowitz family's human embryos were successfully implanted in a third-party surrogate mother. The surrogate gave all rights to any prospective child to the Litowitz' family.

While two of the Litowitz' human embryos did not survive implantation, a daughter ("M.") was born to the surrogate and

is the lawful child of Petitioner. Becky Litowitz has joint legal custody of M. and is the legal mother of M. Petitioner and Mr. Litowitz already had a biological child at the time of M.'s birth.

While not biologically related to the remaining human embryos, Petitioner is the legal mother of these human embryos, and has been their protector since March of 1996. She continues in her role as protector of them to this day. Because Becky Litowitz is, contractually, the intended parent of the embryos, she is an adoptive and legal parent. It is because of these facts that Petitioner seeks to have her interest in the embryos recognized as a part of her constitutional right to be a parent and to raise children.

Petitioner, along with her husband, contracted with Loma Linda University Medical Center, in California, to cryogenically preserve the remaining human embryos. Loma Linda agreed to provide such cryopreservation services and drafted contracts accordingly. This issue is in litigation.

Petitioner believes that, at the very least, under law, the human embryos, are, or ought to be, entitled to the special respect due all human life, including the opportunity for implantation and gestation. The State of Washington has failed to recognize Petitioner's status as a 'parent.'

ARGUMENT FOR REVIEW

I. THERE IS DIVISION AMONG SEVERAL STATES AS TO THE LEGAL STATUS OF HUMAN EMBRYOS

"Although one might think that consent agreements outlining ownership rights [of embryos] in cases of divorce or separation would solve any disagreements, such is not the case. Recent state court decisions demonstrate the opposing views among courts regarding the effectiveness of consent agreements. [fn]. State courts with little, if any, guidance

from legal precedent or their state legislatures face the daunting task of determining the validity of these agreements. State courts confronting such decisions might have to examine property, constitutional, and contract law before reaching a conclusion. [fn]." Matthew Ellis, *In Vitro Fertilization and Consent Agreements: Where Does California Stand?*, 42 Santa Clara L.Rev. 1191, 1192 (2002).

While there is little doubt that the right of self determination, including the decision to be a parent, is fundamental [1], the courts of this nation have been inconsistent in their treatment of this intensely important constitutional issue.

The Tennessee Supreme Court has held that human embryos are neither "property nor "persons." Where there is a dispute over the 'ownership,' Tennessee engages in a balancing test, giving preference to progenitors. Important to analysis of the instant case, it was specifically recognized that there is a federally protected interest in the right to procreate. However, the family in *Davis* did not sign an IVF consent agreement, as did the parents in the instant case and other cases mentioned below. *Davis v. Davis*, 842 S.W.2d 588, 598-602 (Tn. 1992).

In New York it has been held that embryos *may* be entitled to "special respect" under the law, just as in *Davis*. *Kass v. Kass*, 91 N.Y.2d 554, 564-565 (N.Y. 1998). However, the *Kass* Court did not conclude that the woman's right of privacy in reproductive choice was invoked simply because of the existence of cryogenically preserved embryos related to her. *Id.* Without committing to a public policy stance that would make all IVF consent agreements enforceable, the Court concluded that one can look to the parties' intentions to

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[1] *See generally, Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pa. v. Casey*, 505 U.S. 833, 112 S.Ct. 2791, 120 L.Ed.2d 674 (1992).

determine disposition. In *Kass*, neither party could lay claim to the embryos. *Id.* at 565-566, 569.

In Massachusetts, that state's highest court has held that, where an unambiguous IVF consent form, by its terms, allowed the embryos to be given to the mother following divorce, it could still find pragmatic ambiguity as to disposition of the embryos. The Court also concluded that, as a matter of public policy, it would not force one to become a "parent" at the will of an ex-spouse. *A.Z. v. B.Z.*, 725 N.E.2d 1051, 1056-1058 (Mass. 2000).

A federal court in Virginia has dealt with the relevant issues by recognizing that biological parents' "proprietary interests" in frozen embryos were limited to the options set forth in any written agreement between the parents. The independent legal status of human embryos was not established. *York v. Jones*, 717 F.Supp. 421, 423-425 (E.D. Va. 1989).

In California, human byproducts (including sperm) cannot be deemed property per se'. *Moore v. Regents of the University of California*, 51 C.3d. 120, 136-137 (1990). *See also,* Judith D. Fischer, *Misappropriation of Human Eggs and Embryos and the Tort of Conversion: A Relational View*, 32 Loy. L.A. L.Rev. 381 (1999). The Court did not attempt to address the issue of what occurs when genetic individuation occurs during conception. If it is that one cannot "own" one's own sperm or cell lines, then one must certainly conclude that one cannot possibly own a genetically unique human embryo.

Nevertheless, California has allowed a woman to extend what appears to be an 'ownership' interest to the cell lines of a deceased husband, over the objections of his biological family. *Hecht v. Superior Court*, 16 Cal.App.4th 836 (Cal.App. 1993), review denied.

Finally, in *Johnson v. Calvert*, 851 P.2d. 776 (1993), the California Supreme Court recognized that a surrogate mother

and biological mother could possess "equal" maternity rights under the Uniform Parentage Act. *Id.* at 781.

What can be construed from the varying opinions on the status of stored human embryos is that there is no identifiable consistency in the states' opinions. Review is needed because the inconsistency of the states relates to a fundamental right under the United States Constitution. While one might be inclined to argue that this case gives rise to a "states rights" issue, firmly established jurisprudence on reproductive freedom and the right to self determination suggests otherwise. *Casey, supra.* The importance of the present issues to unmarried persons, single parents, same-sex couples, preborn human life, and healthcare providers cannot be understated.

If the lower court decision is left standing, one is left to believe that human embryos do not have the "special respect" recognized in *Kass* and *Davis*. Moreover, one is left to believe that an adoptive or intended parent's rights deserve lesser recognition than those of biological parents. While this inequality could be justified by public policy in support of nuclear families, the ambiguity created by varying state law is damaging to all American families, and the individual rights of all who wish to become parents. All the while, America's healthcare providers are serving as guardians of each of the unique human beings that remain in cryogenic preservation. The constitutional uncertainty created by the instant case, and the others cited above, potentially affects over 6.1 million American women with fertility problems.[2] The legal status of frozen human embryos is an unresolved problem of a constitutional dimension.

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[2] Kate W. Lyon, *Babies on Ice: The Legal Status of Frozen Embryos Involved in Custody Disputes During Divorce*, 21 Whittier L.Rev. 695, fn. 4 (2000).

II. PUBLIC POLICY REQUIRES CLEAR DEFINITIONS OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A "PARENT" OR "INTENDED PARENT"

This case calls directly into question what it means to be a "parent," and to have the rights associated with the legal status of "parenthood." If review is not granted, it would appear that millions of prospective natural and adoptive parents will have their rights determined by reference to mere property agreements and not by constitutional measure. The position of Washington and other states is inconsistent with this Court's own view of what it means to become a "parent."

The right of self determination, as exercised through becoming a "parent," has been consistently recognized as "fundamental." Indeed, "[F]reedom of personal choice in matters of family life is a fundamental liberty interest." *Santosky v. Kramer*, 455 U.S. 745, 753 (1982). *Accord*; *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 [recognition of fundamental rights in personal definitions of familial relations]. Counsel is aware of no case that suggests that, once one has become an intended parent or adoptive parent, one's rights are somehow unequal to those of biological parents. If the decision in the instant matter is allowed to stand, the fundamental right to become an adoptive parent is damaged.

The conclusion that the states may not interfere with the right to become a parent is established in *Prince v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, 321 U.S. 158, 166 (1943), wherein the Honorable Court stated that, "It is cardinal with us that the custody, care and nurture of the child resides first in the parents, whose primary function and freedom include the preparation for obligations the state can neither supply nor hinder." [3]

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[3] *Also see, Parham v. J.R.*, 442 U.S. 584, 602 (1979). *See also, Stanley v. Illinois*, 405 U.S. 645, 651 (1972) [recognizing the interest of a parent

In fact, "Among the most important of the liberties accorded this special treatment is the freedom of a parent and child to maintain, cultivate, and mold their ongoing relationship. [. . .] The constitutional interest in the development of parental and filial bonds free from governmental interference has many avatars. [. . .] And, above all, it is manifested in the reciprocal rights of parent and child to one another's 'companionship.'" *Franz v. United States*, 707 F.2d 582, fns. 53-57 (D.C. Cir., 1983).[4] Here, the states' treatment of IVF contracts and cryogenic preservation of human embryos suggest that the interest in companionship with one's children is de minimus or nonexistent.

In assessing the constitutional landscape presented here, the *Kass* Court recognized that:

> "Proliferating cases regarding the disposition of embryos, as well as other assisted reproduction issues, will unquestionably spark further progression of the law.

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in the management of the child's affairs}; *Quilloin v. Walcott*, 434 U.S. 246, 255 (1978) [recognizing that parental rights are well established in American jurisprudence]; *Santosky v. Kramer*, 455 U.S. 745, 753 (1982) [referencing the fundamental liberty interest of natural parents in the care, custody and management of their children]; *Washington v. Glucksberg*, 521 U.S. 702, 720 (1997) [parental rights to direct education of children]; *Doe v. Irwin*, 441 F.Supp. 1247 (Mich., 1985) [acknowledging rights of parents as deriving from First, Fifth, Ninth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution]; *In the Interest of Cooper*, 631 P.2d 632 (Kan., 1981) [temporary losses of custody of children are grievous]. The rights to conceive and raise one's children have been deemed 'essential,' *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390, 399 (1923) [labeled as 'basic civil rights of man']; *Skinner v. Oklahoma*, 316 U.S. 535, 541 (1942)[recognition that parentage involves rights more precious than property rights].

[4] Citing, in part, *Quilloin v. Walcott*, 434 U.S. at 255; *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205, 232-33 (1972); *Stanley, Id.* at 405 U.S. 651; *Prince, Id.* at 166; *Parham, Id.*, at 602-604; *Duchesne v. Sugarman*, 566 F.2d 817, 825 (2d.Cir., 1977).

> [fn.]. What is plain, however, is the need for clear consistent principles to guide the parties in protecting their interests and resolving their disputes, and the need for particular care in fashioning such principles as issues are better defined and appreciated."

Kass, 91 N.Y.2d 564.

Unfortunately, the clarity desired by the 1998 *Kass* Court has not yet come to fruition. All the while, issues concerning the role of same sex relationships in reproductive technology, the participation of non-biologically related persons in the decisions of natural parents, and the "special" legal status of embryos, are coming to a critical mass.

While it is true that the law often procrastinates in its willingness to advance with technology, the Constitution should always serve in the role of being a ready guidepost for the direction of technology which affects the most basic aspects of our humanity. The states have failed in defining the role of the Constitution and have created more confusion than clarity in determining what it means to be a "parent" and "custodian" of human embryos. Moreover, Congress and the state legislatures have remained essentially silent on the issues herein, although fundamental constitutional rights hang in an undefined balance. For this reason, Petitioner respectfully prays for review in this case.

CONCLUSION

Review should be granted in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

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December 11, 2002

APPENDIX A

THE SUPREME COURT OF WASHINGTON

[Filed September 12, 2002]

No. 70413-9

In re the Marriage of DAVID LITOWITZ,

Respondent,

and

BECKY LITOWTZ,

Petitioner.

ORDER DENYING MOTION
FOR RECONSIDERATION

The Court having considered the Petitioner's Motion for Reconsideration of Decision Entered in June 13, 2002;

Now, therefore, it is hereby

ORDERED:

That the Petitioner's Motion for Reconsideration is denied.

DATED at Olympia, Washington this 12th day of September 2002.

/s/ [Illegible]
Chief Justice

APPENDIX B

SUPREME COURT OF WASHINGTON

[Filed Sept. 10, 2002]

No. 70413-9

In the Matter of the Marriage of DAVID J. LITOWITZ,
Respondent,

and

BECKY M. LITOWITZ,
Petitioner.

ORDER
CHANGING OPINION

It is hereby ordered that the concurring opinion of Justice Chambers in the above cause, as the same appears at 146 Wash.2d 514, 534, 48 P.3d 261, be changed as follows:

1. In the eighth and seventh lines from the bottom of page 534, [18th and 19th line from top of column two of page 271 of 48 P.3d] the text "CHAMBERS, J. (concurring)—I concur with the result reached by the majority." is deleted and the following text is inserted in its place:

> CHAMBERS, J. (concurring in part and dissenting in part). I largely concur with the reasoning of the majority. However, I would remand for further proceedings based on contract principles, equity, and public policy.

2. In the seventh line from the bottom of page 534, [19th line from top of column two of page 271 of 48 P.3d], the sentence beginning with the words "The majority grounds" begins a new paragraph.

3. The following sentence is inserted at the end of the opinion in the 10th line from the top of page 535 [7th line from bottom of column two of p. 271, of 48 P.3d]: "However, given that the trial court applied a different standard, remand is the appropriate remedy."

4. In 11th line from the top of page 535, [6th line from bottom of column two of page 271 of 48 P.3d] the sentence "IRELAND, J., concurs with CHAMBERS, J." is deleted.

APPENDIX C

SUPREME COURT OF WASHINGTON
EN BANC

[Filed June 13, 2002]

No. 70413-9

In re the Marriage of DAVID J. LITOWITZ,
Respondent,

v.

BECKY M. LITOWITZ,
Petitioner.

SMITH, J.

Petitioner Becky M. Litowitz seeks review of a decision of the Court of Appeals, Division Two, which affirmed an order of the Thurston County Superior Court in favor of Respondent David J. Litowitz in a dissolution action in which Respondent was awarded two cryopreserved[1] preembryos.[2]

[1] STEDMAN'S MEDICAL DICTIONARY 416 (26th ed.1995) ("cryopreservation" is defined as the "[m]aintenance of the viability of excised tissues or organs at extremely low temperatures.").

See Lee Kuo, Note, *Lessons Learned from Great Britain's Human Fertilization and Embryology Act: Should the United States Regulate the Fate of Unused Frozen Embryos?*, 19 Loy. L.A. Int'l & Com. L.J. 1027, 1030-31 (1997) ("Cryopreservation is achieved by freezing the embryos in liquid nitrogen at negative 195 degrees centigrade. After freezing, the embryos are carefully stored and may later be thawed for implantation in a recipient's uterus." (footnote omitted)).

[2] Clerk's Papers at 177-78. "The term 'preembryo' denotes that stage in human development immediately after fertilization occurs. The preembryo 'comes into existence with the first cell division and lasts until the appearance of a single primitive streak, which is the first sign of organ differentiation. This [primitive streak] occurs at about fourteen days of development.'" Donna A. Katz, Note, *My Egg, Your Sperm, Whose*

The Court of Appeals affirmed the trial court and awarded the preembryos to Respondent.[3] This court granted review. We reverse.

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

The questions presented in this case are: (1) whether the Court of Appeals was correct when it affirmed a Superior Court award of two cryopreserved preembryos to Respondent David J. Litowitz in a parenting plan in a dissolution action and (2) whether a motion by Respondent David J. Litowitz to submit additional evidence on review should be granted.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

On February 27, 1982 Petitioner Becky M. Litowitz and Respondent David J. Litowitz were married.[4] Respondent adopted Petitioner's two children from a previous marriage.[5] On July 15, 1980, prior to their marriage, Petitioner and Respondent had a child together, Jacob Litowitz.[6] Shortly after Jacob was born Petitioner Litowitz had a hysterectomy leaving her unable to produce eggs or to naturally give birth to a child.[7]

Petitioner and Respondent decided to have another child through *in vitro* fertilization.[8] They sought the services of the

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Preembryo? A Proposal for Deciding Which Party Receives Custody of Frozen Preembryos, 5 Va. J. Soc. Pol'y & L. 623, 628-29 n. 42 (1998) (alteration in original) (quoting Clifford Grobstein, *Human Development from Fertilization to Birth, in Encyclopedia of Bioethics* 847 (Warren Thomas Reich ed., 1995)).

[3] *Litowitz v. Litowitz*, 102 Wash.App. 934, 10 P.3d 1086 (2000).

[4] Clerk's Papers at 2.

[5] *Id.*

[6] *Id.* at 4.

[7] *Id.*

[8] STEDMAN'S MEDICAL DICTIONARY 637 (26th ed. 1995) ("*In vitro* fertilization *(IVF)*" is "a process whereby (usually multiple) ova are

Center for Surrogate Parenting, Loma Linda University Gynecology and Obstetrics Medical Group, in Loma Linda, California.[9] Five preembryos were created with eggs received from an egg donor.[10] The eggs were fertilized by Respondent Litowitz' sperm.[11] Three of the five preembryos were implanted in a surrogate mother, producing a female child, M., who was born January 25, 1997.[12] The two remaining preembryos were cryopreserved and stored in the clinic in Loma Linda, California.[13]

Petitioner and Respondent entered into a contract in Beverly Hills, California with the egg donor. The contract was signed by Petitioner Becky M. Litowitz on March 20, 1996, by Respondent David J. Litowitz on March 21, 1996 [14] and by the egg donor, J.Y., and her husband, E.Y., on April 1,

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placed in a medium to which sperm are added for fertilization, the zygote thus produced then being introduced into the uterus and allowed to develop to term.").

In vitro fertilization "involves hormonal stimulation of the woman's ovaries, resulting in the ovulation of multiple eggs (frequently ten or more). The eggs are then removed via laparoscopy, a surgical procedure, or needle aspiration guided by ultrasound and are combined in a petri dish with either fresh or thawed sperm. The resulting 'preembryos' are allowed to divide until they reach the two- to eight-cell stage. Between one and six preembryos are inserted via catheter into the uterus, where it is hoped at least one will implant in the uterine wall and grow to full term." Katz, *supra* note 2, at 628-29 (footnotes omitted).

[9] 13 Report of Proceedings (Oct. 26, 1998) at 6.

[10] 11 Report of Proceedings (Oct. 21, 1998) at 51.

[11] *Id.*

[12] 11 Report of Proceedings (Oct. 21, 1998) at 51; 9 Report of Proceedings (Oct. 26, 1998); 13 Report of Proceedings (Oct. 26, 1998) at 13. The egg donor was not the surrogate mother.

[13] 11 Report of Proceedings (Oct. 21, 1998) at 54.

[14] Clerk's Papers at 159.

1996.[15] The contract defined Petitioner as the "Intended Mother" and Respondent as the "Natural Father."[16] The "Intended Mother" and "Natural Father" are further defined as the "Intended Parents."[17] The egg donor contract provided in part:

PARAGRAPH 13

> All eggs produced by the Egg Donor pursuant to this Agreement shall be deemed the property of the Intended Parents and as such, the Intended Parents shall have the sole right to determine the disposition of said egg(s). In no event may the Intended Parents allow any other party the use of said eggs without express *written* permission of the Egg Donor.[18]

Respondent and Petitioner entered into two contracts with the Loma Linda Center for Fertility and In Vitro Fertilization in Loma Linda, California. One, a consent and authorization for preembryo cryopreservation (freezing) following *in vitro* fertilization, dated March 25, 1996, provided for freezing the preembryos.[19] The other was an agreement and consent for cryogenic preservation (short term), dated March 25, 1996.[20]

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[15] Identity protection for the donor is required under the contract.

[16] *Id.*

[17] *Id.*

[18] *Id.* at 5.

[19] Answer to Pet. for Review, App. at 12-18. On one line Petitioner Becky M. Litowitz indicated next to her signature the date "3-26-95," although the date indicated by her and all other signators on the other lines was the year "96."

[20] Answer to Pet. for Review, App. at 17-18. The agreement was titled, "Agreement and Consent for Cryogenic Preservation (Short Term)". That contract is not relevant to the issues before the court in this case.

The consent and authorization for preembryo cryopreservation contract stated in part:

LEGAL STATUS AND DISPOSITIONAL CHOICES

We have been advised and understand that the legal status of the frozen pre-embryos has not been fully determined. In this regard, we acknowledge that we have been advised to seek independent legal counsel concerning our respective rights with regard to each pre-embryo placed in cryopreservation. We agree that because both the husband and wife are participants in the cryopreservation program, that any decision regarding the disposition of our pre-embryos will be made by mutual consent. In the event we are unable to reach a mutual decision regarding the disposition of our pre-embryos, we must petition to a Court of competent jurisdiction for instructions concerning the appropriate disposition of our pre-embryos.

We are aware that for a variety of reason [sic], (e.g. our choice, death of both of us, our achieving our desired family size) one or more pre-embryos may remain frozen and will not be wanted or needed by us. *By this document, we wish to provide the Center with our mutual direction regarding disposition of our pre-embryos upon the occurrence of any one of the following four (4) events or dates:*

A. The death of the surviving spouse or in the event of our simultaneous death.

B. In the event we mutually withdraw our consent for participation in the cryopreservation program.

C. *Our pre-embryos have been maintained in cryopreservation for five (5) years after the initial date of*

cryopreservation unless the Center agrees, at our request, to extend our participation for an additional period of time.

D. The Center ceases its *in vitro* fertilization and cryopreservation program.

At the earliest of the above-mentioned events or dates, we authorize and request that one of the following options be utilized for the disposition of our pre-embryos remaining in cryopreservation:

(1) That our pre-embryos be donated to another infertile couple (who shall remain unknown to all parties concerned), selected by the attending physician and/or the medical director of the Program, in which case we would relinquish any and all claim of maternal and/or paternal right to the donated pre-embryos;

(2) That our pre-embryos be donated for approved research and/or investigation;

(3) *That our pre-embryos be thawed but not allowed to undergo further development;*

(4) That our pre-embryos be disposed of in accordance with the best judgement [sic] of the professional staff of the Center.[21]

Petitioner and Respondent indicated their "desire for the ultimate disposition of [their] pre-embryos" by writing in longhand in the space provided on the contract "# 3—That our pre-embryos be thawed but not allowed to undergo further development."[22] Following that statement and the signatures of the Litowitzes, the contract stated, "We agree that this option selection is binding upon us until such time as it is changed, in writing, by our joint direction."[23]

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[21] Answer to Pet. for Review, App. at 14-16 (emphasis added).

[22] *Id.*

[23] *Id.*

Petitioner and Respondent separated before their daughter, M., was born.[24] In the dissolution proceedings in the Pierce County Superior Court, Respondent on October 21, 1998 indicated his wish to put the remaining preembryos up for adoption.[25] In those proceedings Petitioner on October 26, 1998 indicated her wish to implant the remaining preembryos in a surrogate mother and bring them to term.[26] On December 11, 1998 the trial court, the Honorable Waldo F. Stone, awarded the preembryos to Respondent David J. Litowitz based upon the "best interest of the child."[27] The order signed by Judge Stone provided in part:

> DISPOSITION OF PREEMBRYOS: This court makes the following decision awarding the preembryos to father in the best interest of the child. f this child is brought into the world here in Tacoma or Federal Way, Washington the alternatives are not in the child's best interest. In the first alternative the child would be a child of a single parent. That is not in the best interest of a child that could have an opportunity to be brought up by two parents. In the second alternative, the child may have a life of turmoil as the child of divorced parents. Also, both parties here are old enough to be the grandparents of any child, and that is not an ideal circumstance. The court awards the preembryos to Father with orders to use his best efforts for adoption to a two-parent, husband and wife, family outside the State of Washington, considering the egg donor in that, as Father is required.[28]

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[24] 11 Report of Proceedings (Oct. 21, 1998) at 60.

[25] 11 Report of Proceedings (Oct. 21, 1998) at 55.

[26] 13 Report of Proceedings (Oct. 26, 1998) at 15, 20.

[27] Clerk's Papers at 143.

[28] *Id.* at 143. The characterization of frozen preembryos as "children" is of dubious legal or scientific correctness. However, it is of no consequence to our determination in this case.

On December 11, 1998, Judge Stone also issued an order staying the order on preembryos and the restraining order on Petitioner.[29] The order prevented Petitioner from removing or in any way altering the status of the preembryos until final judgments including "any and all appeals" are entered in the action.[30]

On January 7, 1998 the court, under a stipulation, appointed Steve Downing to serve as guardian ad litem for the two preembryos.[31]

In affirming the trial court, the Court of Appeals concluded the contracts signed by Petitioner and Respondent in California did not require Respondent to continue with their family plan to have another child and that Respondent's right not to procreate compelled the court to award the preembryos to him.[32]

On November 16, 2000 Petitioner Becky M. Litowitz sought review by this court [33] which was granted on April 12, 2001.[34]

On May 8, 2001 Respondent David J. Litowitz filed a motion to allow additional evidence on review.[35] He indicated the evidence related to (1) Petitioner Litowitz' drug use discovered after the final decree of dissolution and parenting plan which resulted in modification of the parenting plan designating Respondent David J. Litowitz as the primary

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[29] *Id.* at 197.

[30] *Id.*

[31] *Id.* at 148.

[32] *Litowitz*, 102 Wash.App. at 946, 10 P.3d 1086.

[33] Pet. for Review, Washington Supreme Court (Nov. 16, 2001).

[34] Order, Washington Supreme Court (Apr. 12, 2001).

[35] Mot. to Allow Additional Evidence on Review, Washington Supreme Court (May 8, 2001).

residential parent for M.; and (2) a report that Petitioner Litowitz attempted to murder Respondent by paying a third party to have him killed.[36] Respondent asked this court to remand this matter to the trial court for testimony on the suitability of Petitioner to be a parent.[37] In the alternative, he asked this court to consider affidavits filed in the Pierce County Superior Court in the child custody modification action.[38]

DISCUSSION
CONTRACTUAL ISSUES

This is the first case in which this court has been asked to resolve a dispute over disposition of frozen preembryos in a dissolution action. There is limited case law in other jurisdictions involving disputes over disposition of frozen preembryos. We have identified cases addressing the issue from the highest courts of Tennessee, Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey.

In *Davis v. Davis* the Tennessee Supreme Court laid a framework for deciding disputes between divorcing couples over frozen preembryos.[39] The court stated that

> disputes involving the disposition of preembryos produced by *in vitro* fertilization should be resolved, first, by looking to the preferences of the progenitors. If their wishes cannot be ascertained, or if there is dispute, then their prior agreement concerning disposition should be carried out. If no prior agreement exists, then the relative interests of the parties in using or not using the preembryos must be weighed.[40]

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[36] *Id.* at 1-2.

[37] *Id.*

[38] *Id.* at 2.

[39] *Davis v. Davis*, 842 S.W.2d 588, 597 (Tenn.1992).

[40] *Id.* at 604.

In that case both parties were progenitors.[41] The woman provided the eggs and the man provided the sperm.[42] One party wished to donate the preembryos to another couple and the other wished to discard them.[43] The court balanced the relative interests of the parties, even though they had not signed an agreement, and found in favor of the party wishing to discard the preembryos.[44]

In *Kass v. Kass* the New York Court of Appeals concluded the parties' agreement to donate preembryos to an *in vitro* fertilization program for research purposes would control.[45] In that case both parties were progenitors.[46] The woman wanted to implant the pre-zygotes[47] to achieve another pregnancy.[48] The man opposed any pregnancy and counter-claimed for specific performance of the agreement to allow the *in vitro* fertilization program to keep them for research.[49] The parties had signed four consent agreements provided by the hospital.[50] The significant one provided in part:

> In the event of divorce, we understand that legal ownership of any stored pre-zygotes [51] must be determined

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[41] STEDMAN'S MEDICAL DICTIONARY 1434 (26th ed. 1995) (A "progenitor" is "[a] precursor, ancestor; one who begets.").

[42] *Davis*, 842 S.W.2d at 591-92.

[43] *Id.* at 590.

[44] *Id.* at 603-05.

[45] *Kass v. Kass*, 91 N.Y.2d 554, 562, 569, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350, 696 N.E.2d 174 (1998).

[46] *Kass*, 91 N.Y.2d at 560, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350, 696 N.E.2d 174.

[47] The terms "preembryo" and "pre-zygotes," while technically not the same, are used interchangeably in the cases.

[48] *Id.* at 560, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350, 696 N.E.2d 174.

[49] *Id.*

[50] *Id.* at 558, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350, 696 N.E.2d 174.

[51] The court defined "pre-zygote" as "'eggs which have been penetrated by sperm but have not yet joined genetic material.'" *Kass*, 91 N.Y.2d at 556 n. 1, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350, 696 N.E.2d 174.

> in a property settlement and will be released as directed by order of a court of competent jurisdiction. Should we for any reason no longer wish to attempt to initiate a pregnancy, we understand that we may determine the disposition of our frozen pre-zygotes remaining in storage.

The possibility of our death or any other unforeseen circumstances that may result in neither of us being able to determine the disposition of any stored frozen pre-zygotes requires that we now indicate our wishes. . . .[52]

The couple indicated that, in the event they no longer wished to initiate a pregnancy or if they were unable to make a decision regarding disposition of their frozen pre-zygotes, the clinic could use the pre-zygotes for research and then dispose of them.[53] The court found the consent agreement manifested the party's intent and concluded the pre-zygotes must be donated to the clinic.[54]

In *A.Z. v. B.Z.*, the Massachusetts Supreme Court determined a consent agreement, providing that upon the donors' separation the preembryos would be given to one of the donors for implantation, would not be enforced under the facts of the case.[55] The court concluded the contract was only intended to define the donors' relationship with the clinic; it did not contain a duration provision; it did not represent the true intention of the parties for disposition of the preembryos; and it was against public policy to compel a person to be a parent against that person's will.[56]

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[52] *Id.* at 559, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350, 696 N.E.2d 174.

[53] *Id.* at 559-60, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350, 696 N.E.2d 174.

[54] *Id.* at 570, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350, 696 N.E.2d 174.

[55] *A.Z. v. B.Z.*, 431 Mass. 150, 158, 725 N.E.2d 1051 (2000).

[56] *A.Z.*, 431 Mass. at 157-62, 725 N.E.2d 1051.

Petitioner Becky M. Litowitz claims she has a contractual right to the cryopreserved preembryos in this case and that the Court of Appeals erred when it ignored her contractual right to them.[57] She maintains the egg donor contract gives her and Respondent equal rights to the preembryos.[58] She argues that a biological relationship should not be the only factor used in determining whether she has a right to them.[59]

Respondent David J. Litowitz argues the egg donor contract does not provide for disposition of the preembryos to Petitioner.[60] He claims there was no specific provision in that contract relating to disposition of the preembryos or disposition in the event of divorce.[61]

The Court of Appeals concluded there was no express agreement to enforce because under the cryopreservation contract Petitioner and Respondent are required to petition the court for instructions only in the event they could not reach a mutual decision concerning disposition of the preembryos.[62]

The Tennessee Supreme Court has wisely observed that disputes involving disposition of preembryos produced by *in vitro* fertilization should be resolved by looking to the preferences of the progenitors.[63] That court stated that "[i]f their wishes cannot be ascertained, or if there is dispute, then their prior agreement concerning disposition should be carried out."[64]

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[57] Pet. for Review at 4.

[58] *Id.*

[59] *Id.* at 5.

[60] Answer to Pet. for Review at 9.

[61] *Id.* at 6-7.

[62] *Litowitz*, 102 Wash.App. at 941, 10 P.3d 1086.

[63] *Davis*, 842 S.W.2d at 604.

[64] *Id.*

The Massachusetts Supreme Court offers common sense advice that agreements regarding disposition of preembryos should be presumed valid and binding, and enforced in any dispute;[65] and that before embarking on *in vitro* fertilization and cryopreservation, the parties should think through possible contingencies and specify their wishes in writing.[66] That court stated that "[a]dvance directives, subject to mutual change of mind that must be jointly expressed, both minimize misunderstandings and maximize procreative liberty by reserving to the progenitors the authority to make what is in the first instance a quintessentially personal, private decision."[67]

In *J.B. v. M.B.* the New Jersey Supreme Court recently decided a case in which the woman, J.B., wished to discard remaining preembryos and the man, M.B., wished to implant them or donate them to infertile couples.[68] J.B. and M.B. signed a consent form providing that the couple would relinquish their control to the In Vitro Fertilization Program in the event of a "dissolution of [their] marriage by court order, unless the court specifies who takes control and direction of the tissues."[69] The Court held that when one party has reconsidered that party's prior decision, the interests of both parties must be evaluated.[70] The court indicated that since M.B. is capable of fathering additional children and J.B. has the right to prevent implantation of the preembryos, the remaining preembryos should be destroyed.[71]

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[65] *See Kass*, 91 N.Y.2d at 565, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350, 696 N.E.2d 174; *see Davis*, 842 S.W.2d at 597.

[66] *Id.*

[67] *Id.*

[68] *J.B. v. M.B.*, 170 N.J. 9, 783 A.2d 707 (2001).

[69] *Id.* at 14, 783 A.2d 707.

[70] *Id.* at 30, 783 A.2d 707.

[71] *Id.*

This case involves a dispute over frozen preembryos between Petitioner, who is not a progenitor, and Respondent, who is a progenitor. In the four cases cited from Tennessee, Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey, one party to each dispute contributed the egg and the other party contributed the sperm. They were all progenitors. In this case Petitioner did not produce the eggs used to create the preembryos. She has no biological connection to the preembryos and is not a progenitor. Any right she may have to the preembryos must be based solely upon contract.

The egg donor contract provides:

> All eggs produced by the Egg Donor pursuant to this Agreement shall be deemed *the property of the Intended Parents and as such, the Intended Parents shall have the sole right to determine the disposition of said egg(s).* In no event may the Intended Parents allow any other party the use of said eggs without express *written* permission of the Egg Donor.[72]

(Emphasis added).

Petitioner Becky M. Litowitz correctly asserts that the egg donor contract gives her and Respondent equal rights to the eggs even though she is not a progenitor. The contract defines Petitioner Litowitz as the "Intended Mother" and Respondent David J. Litowitz as the "Natural Father."[73] It defines the "Intended Parents" as the Natural Father and the Intended Mother.[74] The contract provides that the intended parents, Petitioner and Respondent, have a right to determine disposition of the eggs. Even though Respondent Litowitz, as the intended father, indeed has a biological connection to the preembryos, he has no greater contractual right to the eggs

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[72] Clerk's Papers at 163.

[73] *Id.*

[74] *Id.*

than Petitioner Litowitz has as the intended mother. Under that contract, Petitioner and Respondent would have equal rights to the eggs. But the egg donor contract does not relate to the preembryos which resulted from subsequent sperm fertilization of the eggs.

It is not correct to conclude, as now asserted by Respondent, that there was no written agreement concerning intervention by the court. The cryopreservation contract provided "in the event [the Litowitzes] are unable to reach a mutual decision regarding the disposition of [their] pre-embryos, they must petition a court of competent jurisdiction for instructions concerning the appropriate disposition of [their] pre-embryos."[75] Petitioner and Respondent agreed to this. Neither questions whether the cryopreservation contract is an enforceable one. Indeed, they both rely upon it in asserting their rights.

It is obvious that Petitioner and Respondent have not reached a mutual decision regarding disposition of the preembryos. Because they have not, it is appropriate for the courts to determine disposition of the preembryos under the cryopreservation contract.

"The touchstone of contract interpretation is the parties' intent."[76] Contract interpretation must be based on the intent of the parties as reflected in their agreement.[77] Intent may be discovered not only from actual language in an agreement, but also from " 'viewing the contract as a whole, the subject matter and objective of the contract, all the circumstances surrounding the making of the contract, the subsequent

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[75] Answer to Pet. for Review, App. at 14-16.

[76] *Tanner Elec. Coop. v. Puget Sound Power & Light*, 128 Wash.2d 656, 674, 911 P.2d 1301 (1996). *See Scott Galvanizing, Inc., v. N.W. EnviroServices, Inc.*, 120 Wash.2d 573, 580, 844 P.2d 428 (1993).

[77] *Byrne v. Ackerlund*, 108 Wash.2d 445, 455, 739 P.2d 1138 (1987).

acts and conduct of the parties to the contract, and the reasonableness of respective interpretations advocated by the parties.'" [78]

The cryopreservation contract, signed March 25, 1996, provided for disposition of the Litowitzes' two remaining preembryos. They unequivocally chose the option "[t]hat [their] pre-embryos be thawed but not allowed to undergo further development."[79] The contract provided that when the preembryos had been cryopreserved for five years after the initial date of cryopreservation, the "preembryos would be thawed but not allowed to undergo any further development" unless the Litowitzes requested participation for an additional period of time and the Center agreed. The record does not indicate the exact date the remaining preembryos were frozen.[80] However, the cryopreservation contract was signed by the Litowitzes on March 25, 1996. More than five years have passed since that date. The probable date of implantation of the three preembryos actually used was April 20, 1996. More than five years have passed since that date.

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[78] *Scott*, 120 Wash.2d at 580-81, 844 P.2d 428 (quoting *Berg v. Hudesman*, 115 Wash.2d 657, 667, 801 P.2d 222 (1990) (quoting *Stender v. Twin City Foods, Inc.*, 82 Wash.2d 250, 254, 510 P.2d 221 (1973))).

[79] Answer to Pet. For Review, App. at 14-16.

[80] The court can take judicial notice that cryopreservation occurred on the date the other three preembryos were implanted which resulted in the birth of M. on January 25, 1997. Under a normal gestation period of 280 days, the date of implantation was most probably April 20, 1996.

See Sidney B. Schatkin, *Disputed Paternity Proceedings* 519-20 (Matthew Bender & Co., Inc.1953) (1944) ("The duration of pregnancy, or period of gestation, is the interval in days between the time of impregnation and the beginning of labor. The normal period of gestation, according to the consensus of medical testimony, is approximately 9 calendar months-10 lunar months-or 280 days, calculated from cessation of the last menstruation. In the United States, the courts will judicially notice that a period of 9 calendar months is the usual period of gestation." (footnote omitted.)).

Neither Petitioner nor Respondent claims extension of the contract beyond five years. Under the five-year termination provision of the cryopreservation contract, the Center is directed by the Litowitzes to thaw the preembryos and not allow them to develop any further. There is nothing in the record to indicate whether the two preembryos still exist.

Petitioner claims the decision of the Court of Appeals is internally inconsistent because it held that the contract did not control the dispute between the intended parents while it could be used to extinguish the rights of the egg donor.[81] She asserts the Court of Appeals extinguished the rights of the egg donor when it allowed Respondent the right to transfer the preembryos to a third party without the egg donor's consent as required by the egg donor contract.[82]

Respondent asserts the Court of Appeals did not determine the rights of the egg donor.[83] He maintains the court chose not to determine the egg donor's rights under the contract because he had not sought transfer of the preembryos under terms of that contract, but based his claim only upon the cryopreservation contract.[84] Respondent points out that the egg donor has not been a party at any stage in this litigation and no issues relating to any rights the egg donor might have to the preembryos have been brought before the court.[85]

The Court of Appeals correctly concluded the egg donor contract, at any rate, did not prevent Respondent from donating the preembryos to another couple.[86] The court indicated Respondent would not need written permission

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[81] Pet. for Review at 8.

[82] *Id.* 8-13.

[83] Answer to Pet. for Review at 9.

[84] *Id.* at 10.

[85] *Id.* at 12.

[86] *Litowitz*, 102 Wash.App. at 945, 10 P.3d 1086.

from the egg donor to donate the preembryos because the egg donor contract only required written permission for transfer of the donated eggs. The court correctly observed that the eggs no longer existed as they were identified in the egg donor contract because they were later fertilized by Respondent's sperm and their character was then changed to preembryos.[87] The Court of Appeals did not rule on the rights of the egg donor under the egg donor contract because that matter has not been before the court at any stage of these proceedings. Even if it were, it is doubtful that the egg donor would have a remaining contractual right once the eggs have been fertilized and become preembryos.

Petitioner Becky M. Litowitz argues the term "child," rather than "pre- embryo," is the correct term and concept for the court's consideration in this case.[88] She also claims she has a constitutional right to custody and companionship of a child.[89] Despite the questionable characterization by the trial court of the preembryos as a "child," whether a preembryo is a "child" is not a logical or relevant inquiry under the record now before this court. Besides, Petitioner has not cited sufficient authority to support her argument.

It is at least possible that the two frozen preembryos have been destroyed under terms of the contract between Petitioner, Respondent and the Loma Linda Center for Fertility and In Vitro Fertilization dated March 25, 1996 and the specific direction of Petitioner and Respondent. However, no factual determination has been made concerning it. If the two preembryos still exist, they would be a proper subject for consideration by the court under the cryopreservation

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[87] *Id.*

[88] Pet. for Review at 7.

[89] *Id.* at 13-16.

contract. If they have been destroyed, the issue in this case would be moot.[90] But we do not reach that determination under the limited record before us.

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE ON REVIEW

In his motion to allow additional evidence on review, Respondent David J. Litowitz asked this court to allow additional evidence to be taken in the trial court relating to Petitioner Becky M. Litowitz' drug use discovered after the final decree of dissolution which resulted in a temporary order granting Respondent primary custody of their child, M., and evidence regarding a report that Petitioner Litowitz paid a third party to have Respondent killed.[91] He asked that the evidence be presented upon remand to the trial court to hear testimony on Petitioner Litowitz' suitability to be a parent.[92] He requested that this court, in the alternative, consider affidavits already filed in the Pierce County Superior Court in the child custody modification action.[93] He must satisfy the requirements of RAP 9.11 and particularly subsection (a) which reads:

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE ON REVIEW

> (a) *Remedy Limited.* The appellate court may direct that additional evidence on the merits of the case be taken before the decision of a case on review if: (1) additional proof of facts is needed to fairly resolve the issues on review, (2) the additional evidence would probably change the decision being reviewed, (3) it is equitable to excuse a party's failure to present the evidence to the

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[90] *See Dioxin/Organochlorine Ctr. v. Pollution Control Hearings Bd.*, 131 Wash.2d 345, 350, 932 P.2d 158 (1997); *In re Det. Swanson*, 115 Wash.2d 21, 24, 793 P.2d 962 (1990).

[91] Mot. to Allow Additional Evidence on Review at 1-2.

[92] *Id.*

[93] *Id.* at 2, 11.

trial court, (4) the remedy available to a party through post- judgment motions in the trial court is inadequate or unnecessarily expensive, (5) the appellate court remedy of granting a new trial is inadequate or unnecessarily expensive, and (6) it would be inequitable to decide the case solely on the evidence already taken in the trial court.

. . . .

Respondent presented no sufficient grounds for this court to consider his request for additional evidence on review. We deny his request.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This case is limited to a determination, in a parenting plan incident to a dissolution action, of the contractual rights of a married couple to two cryopreserved (frozen) preembryos remaining after successful implantation of three preembryos in a surrogate mother which resulted in the birth of a child.

Petitioner Becky M. Litowitz and her then husband, Respondent David J. Litowitz, in Beverly Hills, California on March 20, 21, and April 1, 1996 contracted with J.Y. for donation of eggs from J.Y. by transvaginal aspiration so the eggs "shall be removed from [J.Y.'s] body, fertilized with the semen of the Natural Father [Respondent David J. Litowitz]" by which the "fertilized egg(s)/ovum/zygote shall be implanted into the body of . . . a Surrogate Mother for the purpose of carrying the pregnancy to term." This process produced five eggs which were fertilized under terms of the contract.

Petitioner and Respondent on March 25, 1996 entered into two contracts with the Loma Linda Center for Fertility and In Vitro Fertilization in Loma Linda, California, the pertinent one of which was designated "a consent and authorization for pre-embryo cryopreservation (freezing) following *in vitro* fertilization," which provided for freezing the preembryos.

Three of the five fertilized eggs, then called preembryos, were implanted in a surrogate mother, producing a child who was born January 25, 1997. The two remaining preembryos were cryopreserved (frozen) and stored in the clinic in Loma Linda, California. It is these two preembryos which are the sole subject of the litigation before the court in this case.

The egg donor contract is not at issue in this case. This court is concerned only with the preembryo cryopreservation contract. Under that contract Petitioner and Respondent agreed to submit to the court the question of disposition of remaining preembryos in the event they could not reach mutual agreement. They could not reach agreement. The matter has thus been presented to the Pierce County Superior Court, the Court of Appeals and now to this court for appropriate instructions.

It is not necessary for this court to engage in a legal, medical or philosophical discussion whether the preembryos in this case are "children," nor whether Petitioner (who was not a biological participant) is a progenitor as is Respondent (who was a biological participant).

We base our decision in this case solely upon the contractual rights of the parties under the preembryo cryopreservation contract with the Loma Linda Center for Fertility and In Vitro Fertilization dated March 25, 1996. Under that contract Petitioner and Respondent gave direction to the Loma Linda Center for disposition of the remaining preembryos resulting from fertilization of five eggs they acquired under the egg donor contract. They directed that the remaining preembryos be "thawed out but not allowed to undergo further development" and disposed of when the preembryos "have been maintained in cryopreservation for five (5) years after the initial date of cryopreservation unless the Center agree[d], at [the Litowitzes'] request, to extend [their] participation for an additional period of time." The record does not indicate whether the two cryopreserved

preembryos are still in existence. Neither Petitioner nor Respondent has requested an extension of their contract with the Loma Linda Center. Under terms of the contract, then, the remaining preembryos would have been thawed out and not allowed to undergo further development five years after the initial date of cryopreservation, which by simplest calculation would have occurred on March 24, 2001.

The first three preembryos were implanted in a surrogate mother, most probably about April 20, 1996 and certainly not before March 25, 1996, with the resultant birth of a child, M., on January 25, 1997. The date of April 20, 1996 is determined by calculating a 280 day gestation period for the child. Custody of the remaining two preembryos was taken by the Loma Linda Center under the cryopreservation contract on the date the other three were implanted in the surrogate mother.

Petitioner David J. Litowitz filed a motion to allow additional evidence on review. He presented no sufficient grounds under the applicable RAP 9.11 for this court to consider his request for additional evidence. We deny his motion.

We reverse the decision of the Court of Appeals, Division Two.

ALEXANDER, C.J., JOHNSON, MADSEN (result only), SMITH, IRELAND, BRIDGE AND OWENS, JJ., concur.

CHAMBERS, J. (concurring).

I largely concur with the reasoning of the majority. However, I would remand for further proceedings based on contract principles, equity and public policy.

The majority grounds its result upon a contract between the parties and Loma Linda Center for Fertility and In Vitro Fertilization in Loma Linda, California. The majority fails, in my view, to emphasize that this contract must be considered

in the context of a dissolution action. In a dissolution, principles of equity and public policy must be considered by the court in construing agreements between the parties regarding their dissolution. *See* RCW 26.09.080; *see also In re Marriage of Matson*, 107 Wash.2d 479, 485, 730 P.2d 668 (1986); *In re Estate of Crawford,* 107 Wash.2d 493, 498, 730 P.2d 675 (1986). Subject to equity and public policy, great weight should be given to the intent of the parties.

I conclude that the intent of the parties, as evidenced by the written contract, is consistent with equity and public policy as expressed by the Legislature and this Court and should be enforced. However, given that the trial court applied a different standard, remand is the appropriate remedy.

SANDERS, J. (dissenting).

The majority contends the cryopreservation contract controls the disposition of the preembryos. Majority at 268. But even if so, I posit that the contractual text does not support the majority's disposition, but rather the trial court's.

The contract states in pertinent part:

> We agree that because both the husband and wife are participants in the cryopreservation program, that any decision regarding the disposition of our pre-embryos will be made by mutual consent. *In the event we are unable to reach a mutual decision regarding the disposition of our pre-embryos, we must petition to a Court of competent jurisdiction for instructions concerning the appropriate disposition of our pre-embryos.*

Pet'r's Ex. 410, at 3 (Cryopreservation Contract) (emphasis added). The contractual provision vested the trial court with exclusive discretion to determine an appropriate disposition of the preembryos upon request but absent the agreement of the parties.

I however posit this provision of the contract is applicable because the parties *were* unable to come to a mutual decision, and *did* petition a court for an appropriate disposition of their preembryos, strictly in accordance with this clause of the contract. In the reasonable exercise of its contractually vested discretion—and the majority does not claim that discretion was abused—the trial court adopted the "best interests of the child" criterion and awarded the preembryos to David Litowitz. Nevertheless, the majority bases its reversal on the mistaken conclusion that the next clause of the contract dictates a different result. That clause provides:

> We are aware that for a variety of reason, (e.g. our choice, death of both of us, our achieving our desired family size), one or more pre-embryos may remain frozen and *will not be wanted or needed by us.* By this

document, we wish to provide the Center with our mutual direction regarding disposition of our pre-embryos *upon the occurrence of any one of the following four (4) events or dates:*

> A. The death of the surviving spouse or in the event of our simultaneous death. B. In the event we mutually withdraw our consent for participation in the cryopreservation program.
>
> C. Our pre-embryos have been maintained in cryopreservation for five (5) years after the initial date of cryopreservation unless the Center agrees, at our request, to extend our participation for an additional period of time.
>
> D. The Center ceases it's [sic] *in vitro* fertilization and cryopreservation program.

At the earliest of the above-mentioned events or dates, we authorize and request that one of the following options be utilized for the disposition of our pre-embryos remaining in cryopreservation:

. . . .

> (3) That our pre-embryos be thawed but not allowed to undergo further development [selected option].

Id. (emphasis added); majority at 268.

This provision is facially inapplicable because its stated contingencies concern either a *mutual* decision not to produce a child (B, C), the death of both parties (A), or impossibility (D), none of which is present here. Nevertheless, with the unerring precision of a moth to the flame, the majority seizes upon the third contingency, ignoring the mutuality of decision implicit in the phrase "at *our* request." *Id.* (emphasis added).

Its errant reliance on, and misinterpretation of, this provision is further aggravated when the majority gives *no effect* to the previous relevant and operative provision. *See, e.g., McDonald v. State Farm Fire & Cas. Co.*, 119 Wash.2d 724, 734, 837 P.2d 1000 (1992) (courts should interpret the contract in a way that gives effect to each provision). Thus the majority defeats the plain meaning of the first paragraph by divesting the trial court of the authority contractually and exclusively vested in it to resolve disputes of this kind.

Even if one were to apply the second paragraph, carelessly setting aside the former operative provision and ignoring the mutual consent implicit in the third contingency, the contract *still* would not support the majority's outcome because the contractual time period was tolled by the timely commencement of this litigation as a matter of law. *See Wothers v. Farmers Ins. Co. of Wash.*, 101 Wash.App. 75, 79, 5 P.3d 719 (2000). *Cf, Lane v. Wahl*, 101 Wash.App. 878, 6 P.3d 621 (2000) (considering the validity of a 10 year lease even though the record did not indicate whether the lease had been renewed); *CLEAN v. State*, 130 Wash.2d 782, 928 P.2d 1054 (1996) (considering propriety of mandating the Secretary of State to process referendum petition long after 90-day time limit of Const. art. II, § 1(d) to gather signatures had expired).

This contract was signed and the cryopreservation began in the spring of 1996. The dissolution proceeding commenced only two years later and included a timely request that the court provide a timely disposition of the preembryos. The proceeding culminated in a dissolution order dated December 11, 1998. That by today more than five years has passed since the cryopreservation commenced is irrelevant because the judicial action which provided for the disposition of the preembryos was commenced well within the five-year window thereby tolling the contracted period of limitations.

Kass v. Kass, 91 N.Y.2d 554, 696 N.E.2d 174, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350 (1998) is illustrative. The dispute there was not unlike the case at bar, as it concerned the disposition of prezygotes as part of a marriage dissolution proceeding. *Id.*, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350, 696 N.E.2d at 175. During their marriage the couple had obtained in vitro fertilization treatment, as part of which they signed a consent and authorization form on all fours with the one we are asked to interpret here. *See id.*, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350, 696 N.E.2d at 175-76. As in our case, the form in *Kass* indicated the couple's prezygotes would be stored for a maximum of five years. *Id.* The form was dated May 12, 1993 and the court's decision was handed down on May 7, 1998. *Id.*, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350, 696 N.E.2d at 176. But under our majority's reasoning, the five-year termination provision would have been determinative because the subject of the litigation could have been destroyed before the written decision was even delivered to the parties.

But the *Kass* court wisely did not speciously entertain that scenario, as it was apparently the assumption of all there concerned that, as here, the timely commencement of litigation rendered the five-year termination provision inapplicable. Instead, the court focused on the agreement, evidencing the parties' intent to donate their prezygotes to the clinic for research if they could not agree on another disposition. *Id.*, 673 N.Y.S.2d 350, 696 N.E.2d at 176-77, 178.

Here, however, David and Becky Litowitz contracted that if they could not reach an agreement on the disposition of their remaining preembryos they were contractually bound to "petition to a Court of competent jurisdiction for instructions concerning the appropriate disposition of" their preembryos. Pet'r's Ex. 410, at 3. That is exactly what they did, and well within the five-year time frame. Now it is our duty to either enforce the agreement as any other contract or set it aside for some recognized legal reason. *See Eurick v. Pemco Ins. Co.*, 108 Wash.2d 338, 340, 738 P.2d 251 (1987).

To properly enforce this agreement we must ultimately determine the parties' intent at the time they signed the consent and authorization form. Parties' contractual intent is determined objectively by looking to various factors, including (1) the language of the agreement; (2) the agreement as a whole; (3) the context in which the agreement was entered; (4) the parties' conduct following entry into the agreement; and (5) the reasonableness of the interpretations advocated by the parties. *Scott Galvanizing, Inc. v. N.W. EnviroServices, Inc.*, 120 Wash.2d 573, 580-81, 844 P.2d 428 (1993).

This agreement stated exactly what the parties intended in the event they could not agree on the disposition of their preembryos: let the court decide. Provisions whereby parties agree to resort to resolution by courts or arbitrators in the event of disagreement are routinely enforced. *Cf., e.g., Sullivan v. Great Am. Ins. Co.*, 23 Wash.App. 242, 246, 594 P.2d 454 (1979); *Barnett v. Hicks*, 119 Wash.2d 151, 154, 829 P.2d 1087 (1992); *Wagner v. Peshastin Lumber Co.*, 149 Wash. 328, 336, 270 P. 1032 (1928); *State v. Everett*, 144 Wash. 592, 597, 258 P. 486 (1927).

One thing the parties obviously did not intend was to destroy the whole object of the contract, the preembryos, simply because this litigation was prolonged beyond five years after the initial date of cryopreservation while the parties were patiently waiting for appropriate court "instructions concerning the appropriate disposition of [their] preembryos," *nor has either party even argued for that unimagined result.* But the majority's disposition apparently calls for the destruction of unborn human life even when, or if, both contracting parties agreed the preembryos should be brought to fruition as a living child reserving their disagreement over custody for judicial determination. Thus the majority denies these parties that option left by Solomon in lieu of chopping the baby in half. The wisdom of Solomon is nowhere to be found here.

The trial court's decision to strive for a result in the best interest of the potential child was certainly at least one reasonable way to effectuate the intent of the parties. There may have been others, but I cannot fault a trial court that recognized the fundamental purpose and objective of the contract and dealt with the prospect a child would be born, the future of which was of paramount concern and profound responsibility. Even if we were to disagree with the trial court, it was the trial court's discretion to exercise, not ours.

I would therefore affirm the trial court's resolution by ordering David Litowitz to donate the preembryos to a couple suitable to raise the child.

SANDERS, J., dissents.

No. 02-916

Supreme Court, U.S.
FILED
JAN 13 2003
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In The
Supreme Court of the United States

BECKY M. LITOWITZ,

Petitioner,

vs.

DAVID J. LITOWITZ,

Respondent.

On Petition For Writ Of Certiorari To The Supreme Court Of The State Of Washington

BRIEF IN OPPOSITION TO WRIT OF CERTIORARI

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
BRIEF IN OPPOSITION	1
RESPONDENT'S COUNTER STATEMENT	1
A. Definitions	1
B. Contractual Background	3
CERTIORARI SHOULD NOT BE GRANTED BECAUSE THIS CASE DOES NOT MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF SUPREME COURT RULE 10	4
CONCLUSION	6

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Page

FEDERAL CASES

York v. Jones, 717 F. Supp. 421 (E.D. Va. 1989) 5

STATE CASES

A.Z. vs. B.Z., 725 N.E.2d 1051 (Mass. 2000) 5

Davis v. Davis, 842 S.W.2d 588 (Tenn. 1992) 5

Kass v. Kass, 91 N.Y.2d 554 (1998) 5

Litowitz v. Litowitz, 102 Wn. App. 934, 10 P.3d 1086 (Wash. 2000), *rev'd*, 146 Wn.2d 514, 48 P.3d 261 (Wash. 2002) 2, 3

FEDERAL STATUES

Supreme Court Rule 10 4

BRIEF IN OPPOSITION

Respondent David Litowitz respectfully requests this Court to deny Becky Litowitz' petition for writ of certiorari seeking review of the Washington Supreme Court's opinion.

RESPONDENT'S COUNTER STATEMENT

This dispute does not involve any constitutional or federal issues. Instead, the Washington Supreme Court clearly stated that its decision was based solely on state contract law:

> We base our decision in this case solely upon the contractual rights of the parties under the preembryo cryopreservation contract with the Loma Linda Center for Fertility and In Vitro Fertilization dated March 25, 1996.

(Appendix "C," page 24a. to Petitioner's Brief.)

Indeed, the fact that Petitioner is unable to raise a constitutional claim is evident as she has no biological connection to the preembryos. Because Becky Litowitz has no biological connection to the preembryos, the only issue involved in this dispute was the agreement that the parties had reached regarding the disposition of the preembryos made when they began the in vitro process – in other words, a state law contract issue.

A. Definitions

As an initial matter, the Petitioner, at various places in her brief, uses the term "embryos." However, there is no support in the record that the disputed objects here are

embryos. Instead, as the Washington courts have noted, what is at issue are two preembryos. The Washington State court of appeals explained the difference between a preembryo and an embryo:

> Fertilization takes several hours as the twenty-four chromosomes of each gamete (egg and sperm) fuse, yielding a zygote with a unique genome of forty-eight chromosomes. The zygote is then allowed to divide for about three days, until it reaches the two to eight-cell stage. These preembryos, consisting of a few undifferentiated cells, are either implanted or cryopreserved for implantation at a later date. It is not until the cell mass proceeds beyond sixteen cells and implants that it can give rise to an embryo.

Litowitz v. Litowitz, 102 Wn. App. 934, 935, n. 1, 10 P.3d 1086 (Wash. 2000), *rev'd*, 146 Wn.2d 514, 48 P.3d 261 (Wash. 2002).

Petitioner also makes the assertion that she is "the legal mother of these human embryos." (Petitioner's brief at 4.) However, as noted, these are not embryos but instead are preembryos. Further, Petitioner has not cited any legal authority to support her argument that any person could ever be the "mother" of a preembryo, much less a person such as herself who has no biological connection to the preembryo.

Finally, Petitioner asserts: "Because Becky Litowitz is, contractually, the intended parent of the embryos, she is an adoptive and legal parent." (Petitioner's brief at 4.) Petitioner does not cite any authority that would support her claim that she could be characterized under the law as

the "adoptive" parent of a preembryo that is, as noted by the Washington court of appeals, a "few undifferentiated cells."[1]

B. Contractual Background

As part of the in vitro fertilization program into which David and Becky Litowitz participated, they executed three agreements. The Washington Supreme Court held that the only relevant agreement was the one entitled "Consent and Authorization for Pre-embryo Cryopreservation Following In Vitro Fertilization." In that document, the parties agreed that the preembryos would be thawed and not allowed to undergo further development if the prembryos had been maintained in cryopreservation for five years after the initial date of cryopreservation unless both parties requested otherwise. (Appendix "C" at pages 8a-9a.)

The Washington Supreme Court held that the parties were bound by this contractual term and that more than five years had elapsed since the initial date of cryopreservation. (Appendix "C" at pages 19a-20a.)

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[1] The Petitioner also makes some other statements that are inaccurate. At page 3 of her brief, she states, "In March of 1996, as a result of desiring to be a parent" she and David Litowitz enter into the in vitro fertilization program. This is misleading as Becky Litowitz already was the biological mother of two children at that time. *Litowitz v. Litowitz*, 102 Wn. App. 934, 936, 10 P.3d 1086 (Wash. 2000), *rev'd*, 146 Wn.2d 514, 48 P.3d 261 (Wash. 2002). At page 4 of her brief, she represents to this Court that she "has joint legal custody of M." This is false. For the past two years, she no longer had joint legal custody of M and instead is limited to supervised visits with M.

Becky Litowitz is seeking review of the Washington State Supreme Court's decision that was based solely on Washington contract law and in which she could not make a claim that she had any biological connection to the preembryos. Under these circumstances, her request for a writ of certiorari should be denied.

CERTIORARI SHOULD NOT BE GRANTED BECAUSE THIS CASE DOES NOT MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF SUPREME COURT RULE 10.

"A petition for a writ of certiorari will be granted only for compelling reasons." Sup. Ct. R. 10. Rule 10 provides guidance as to the types of cases this Court will review from a state court of last resort:

> (b) a state court of last resort has decided an important federal question in a way that conflicts with the decision of another state court of last resort or of a United States court of appeals;
>
> (c) a state court . . . has decided an important question of federal law that has not been, but should be, settled by this Court, or has decided an important federal question in a way that conflicts with relevant decisions of this Court.

This dispute simply does not involve any federal question, much less an important federal question. Instead, it involves a contract dispute between the parties.

Becky Litowitz, without providing any explanation, argues that the Washington Supreme Court's decision conflicts with the decisions of other state courts of last resort. However, Becky Litowitz fails to acknowledge that the Washington State Supreme Court's opinion did not

decide an important question of federal law. Moreover, the opinions she cites, *Davis v. Davis*, 842 S.W.2d 588 (Tenn. 1992); *Kass v. Kass*, 91 N.Y.2d 554 (1998); *A.Z. v. B.Z.*, 725 N.E.2d 1051 (Mass. 2000); and *York v. Jones*, 717 F. Supp. 421 (E.D. Va. 1989) do not conflict with the contract analysis used by the Washington State Supreme Court. Nor are any of those decisions relevant to this dispute because in each of those cases both parties had biological connections to the preembryos – a fact that does not exist here.

In *Davis*, 842 S.W.2d at 588, the court, in dicta, stated that contracts determining preembryo disposition should be enforced. In *Kass*, 91 N.Y.2d at 174, the court upheld a contract that required the preembryos to be donated for research against the desire of the wife who wanted the preembryos to be awarded to her so she could attempt a pregnancy against the husband's wishes. In *A.Z.*, 725 N.E.2d at 1051, the court held that no agreement regarding cryopreserved preembryos would be enforced to compel a party to become a parent against his wishes. In *York*, 717 F. Supp. at 421, the court held that the pre-zygote was property of the husband and wife who were both progenitors and that the contract terms would be enforced. None of these decisions conflict with the decision by the Washington State Supreme Court.

Finally, Becky Litowitz is arguing that this Court should accept review of this case so it can define the term "parent." However, the Washington State Supreme Court's decision was not based on any such ruling. In contrast to the Washington court of appeals, which held that David Litowitz had a greater interest in the preembryos because they contained his genetic material, the Washington Supreme Court held that David Litowitz' genetic connection to the preembryos was irrelevant to the contract

issue. Instead, under the Washington Supreme Court's analysis, both parties were bound by their prior agreement. Furthermore, the Petitioner fails to provide any legal citation as to how she could ever claim to be characterized as a "parent" of a preembryo to which she has absolutely no biological connection. Once again, Becky Litowitz simply has no federal right that she can advance in this dispute.

CONCLUSION

This dispute simply does not involve any constitutional or federal question whatsoever. Instead, it simply involves a state contract issue and was decided on that basis. The Petitioner has no federal issue to advance as she has no biological connection to the preembryos at issue. For those reasons the Respondent requests this Court to deny Becky Litowitz' petition for a writ of certiorari.

Respectfully submitted,

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JAN 23 2003

No. 02-916

IN THE

Supreme Court of the United States

BECKY M. LITOWITZ,

Petitioner,

v.

DAVID J. LITOWITZ,

Respondent.

On Petition for Motion for Reconsideration to the Supreme Court of the State of Washington

REPLY BRIEF TO OPPOSITION TO REVIEW

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TABLE OF AUTHORITIES	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
ARGUMENT IN REPLY TO OPPOSITION TO REVIEW	2
I. RESPONDENT MISSTATES THE LEGAL STATUS OF EMBRYONIC LIFE	2
II. PETITIONER'S BIOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE EMBRYOS IS NOT RELEVANT TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AT STAKE	5
III. CONTRACTUAL RELATIONS DO NOT TRUMP FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS	7
CONCLUSION	7

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

CASES	Page
In *Re Marriage of Buzzanca*, 61 Cal.App.4th 1410, 72 Cal.Rptr.2d 280 (1998)	5-6
Johnson v. Calvert, 5 Cal.4th 84, 19 Cal.Rptr.2d 494 (1993)	5
Lassiter v. Department of Social Services, 452 U.S. 18 (1981)	6
Planned Parenthood of Southeaster Pa. v. Casey, 505 U.S. 883 (1992)	3
Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 (1973)	3-4
Shin v. Kong, 80 Cal.App.4th 498, 95 Cal.Rptr.2d 304 (2000)	5
Smith v Organization of Foster Families (OFFER), 431 US 816 (1977)	7
Troxel v. Granville, 530 U.S. 57 (2000)	6
Webster v. Reproductive Health Services, 492 U.S. 490 (1989)	6
STATUTES	
California Family Code § 7601	5-6
California Family Code § 7602	5
California Family Code § 7610	6
MISCELLANEOUS	
Gina Kolata, *Fertility, Inc.: Clinics Race to Lure Clients*, N.Y. Times, January 1, 2002	6

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REPLY BRIEF TO OPPOSITION TO REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Respondents' opposition to review hinges on three notions: (A) The courts of this nation do not recognize preborn human life as deserving of any special protection[1]; (B) In order to have a constitutionally protected interest as a "parent," one must have biological ties to his or her children[2]; and, (C) That the states have a right to trump the Constitution by solely relying on state contract law[3]. These contentions actually underscore the need for review of the basic human rights at issue.

---

[1] Brief in Opposition at p. 1-3.

[2] *Id.* at 1, 3-4.

[3] *Id.* at 4-5. Even though the right to be a parent is at the core of a decision to participate in IVF technology, Respondent claims that no federal right was adjudicated by Washington.

The State of Washington's opinion below is at odds with this Court's recognition that unborn life has value which can, and should be, protected where there is no competing interest of a gestational parent.

Secondly, while there is no case by this Court directly stating so, the precedent set by the State of Washington degrades the implicit fundamental rights of surrogate, adoptive, and donor parents.

Finally, Washington's interpretation of contract law is at odds with the constitutional rights of the parties, and others similarly participating in the offerings and promise of modern reproductive technology.

ARGUMENT IN REPLY TO OPPOSITION TO REVIEW

I. RESPONDENT MISSTATES THE LEGAL STATUS OF EMBRYONIC LIFE

Respondent refers to the embryos, his genetic offspring, as "disputed objects," yet fails to recognize that the same type of "object" resulted in the birth of a daughter to Petitioner and Respondent. (Appendix C at p. 6a, fn. 12). The embryos possess an intrinsic value that encompasses the potential for all that it is to be human. This should not be an interest treated lightly by this Court. If Respondent's position on the status of preborn human life is taken as an accurate reflection of how the Washington Supreme Court's ruling, and a potential denial of review by this Honorable Court, should be interpreted by all states, an impending constitutional disaster is afoot.

Interpretation of the United States Constitution suggests that unborn human life is more than a "disputed object." While it is true that the courts have never recognized unborn human beings as "persons," in any complete sense, it is not necessarily true that treating them as 'special interests' is

against public policy and a neutral reading of the United States Constitution. *See generally Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113, 150 (1973). As indicated in the Petition, several of the states do recognize the 'special interest' in embryonic life. (Petitioner's brief at pp. 4-7). Consistent with the recognition of a 'special interest,' the Washington trial court properly appointed a guardian *ad litem* to the embryos. (Appendix C, p. 11a fn. 31). Respondents callous redefinition of "embryos" is not supported by existing precedent, the facts of this case, or raw confrontation with the reality of how human life is reproduced.

The unconstitutionality of failing to recognize the special status of the embryos, and Petitioner's interests in them, was sufficiently raised below. (Appendix C at p. 15a, 17a, 21a fns. 88-89). Justice Chambers of the Washington Supreme Court recognized that resolution as to the status of the embryos was not had, and suggested remand for further consideration "based on contract principles, equity, and public policy." (Appendix B at p. 2a). Remand did not occur, and the "public policy" issues referred to by Justice Chambers are unresolved in the face of conflicting state opinions, and this Court's own recognition of the value of preborn human life. *Roe* at 150, 154.

Public policy, concerning new reproductive technologies, does not support the conclusion that human embryos are per se' 'parentless,' and thus unworthy of this Court's recognition and protection of them as special interests under the United States Constitution. Human embryonic life, absent compelling conflicts, is always deserving of protection against destruction. The interests in preserving the sanctity of life and responsible parenthood are especially compelling where the privacy interests contemplated by *Planned Parenthood of Southeaster Pa. v. Casey*, 505 U.S. 883 (1992) are not

implicated. The issue was addressed squarely by Justice Blackmun when he stated that:

> "Only when the life of the pregnant mother herself is at stake, balanced against the life she carries within her, should the interest of the embryo or fetus not prevail. Logically, of course, a legitimate state interest in this area need not stand or fall on the acceptance of the belief that life begins at conception or at some other point prior to live birth. In assessing the State's interest, recognition may be given to the less rigid claim that as long as at least potential life is involved, the State may assert interests beyond the protection of the pregnant woman alone. [...] [A] state may properly assert important interests in . . . protecting potential life." *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113, 150, 154 (1973).

Here, preborn human life hangs in an undefined constitutional balance, and this Court has already acknowledged the value of protecting all jeopardized interests presented under these facts. *Id.* The State of Washington's decision, "based solely on state contract law," is illustrative of the very need for review in this case. Petitioner contends that the Constitution requires more than simple contractual analysis when the potential for life, or imminent destruction, of human beings is at stake.

With the advent of human cloning at the forefront of the Nation's headlines, and the reality that not all 'parents' are biologically related to the children they bring into existence, it is important that some guidance be given as to the constitutional rights and obligations of those availing themselves of new reproductive technologies. At a bare minimum, Petitioner respectfully requests that this Court give the states a basic constitutional assessment of what is minimally required to insure against the trampling of the rights of parents and the interests of the unborn.

II. PETITIONER'S BIOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE EMBRYOS IS NOT RELEVANT TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AT STAKE

Public policy supports Petitioners attempt to become a responsible parent in the eventuality of the birth of the embryos. The United States Constitution protects the interest in becoming a parent. Petitioner has a clearly established legal interest in the embryos under California law, and the State of California's view of the constitutional right to be a parent. In *Re Marriage of Buzzanca*, 61 Cal.App.4th 1410, 72 Cal.Rptr.2d 280 (1998). The opinion of the Washington Supreme Court is in direct conflict with the constitutional analysis by the California Supreme Court in *Buzzanca*. As such, there is the type of conflict which justifies review under United States Supreme Court Rule 10.

If the opinion of the Washington State Supreme Court is left standing, the constitutionally recognized interest of Petitioner in the familial relationship between herself and the unborn embryos is destroyed even though "[t]he parent child relationship extends equally to every child and to every parent, regardless of the marital status of the parents." *California Family Code* §§ 7601, 7602; *Shin v. Kong*, 80 Cal.App.4th 498, 95 Cal.Rptr.2d 304, rev. den'd (2000).

Here, Respondents conveniently overlook the fact that Petitioner is indeed the legal parent of a sibling of the embryos. Petitioners lack of a biological connection to the embryos, or their sibling, is irrelevant to Petitioner's constitutional and statutory status in the State of California. *Buzzanca* at 61 Cal.App.4th 1415-1417. Again, the Washington Supreme Court's decision is at loggerheads with California law and this Court's own definitions of what it means to be a "parent." *Cf., Johnson v. Calvert*, 5 Cal.4th 84, 100-101, 19 Cal.Rptr.2d 494 (1993) [acknowledgment that the Uniform Parentage Act does not create unequal rights].

Also see California Family Code §§ 7601, 7610 [rights of adoptive parents and required proof for parentage].

This Court's treatment of the scope of non-biologically related 'parents' is not subject to ready application to IVF contracts and other similar technological advances. While these technologies push the definitions of what is meant by 'natural family,' the law is ostensibly silent as to what rights are conferred on participants. *Cf., Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57 "2000); *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, 492 U.S. 490, 522 "1989).[4] The bottom line is that tens of thousands of babies are being created by reproductive technologies, and there is no constitutional guidepost by which the children and their parents can rely for determination of their fundamental rights, or the lack thereof.

Public policy supports the conclusion that, regardless of biological connections to embryonic life, Petitioner and similarly situated persons have equal rights of parentage and concomitant rights, even during the IVF gestational process. *Buzzanca, supra* at 1416-1417. For good reason, "A parent's interest in the accuracy and justice of the decision to terminate his or her parental status is . . . a commanding one." *Lassiter v. Department of Social Services,* 452 U.S. 18, 27 (1981). The conflict of law between Washington, California, Tennessee, New York, Massachusetts, and Virginia warrants

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[4] A search of WestLaw's database indicates that there is only one opinion where "in vitro" fertilization methods are expressly mentioned. I.e., *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services.* Human cloning technology has little or no treatment by the United States Supreme Court. A search of all published federal appellate decisions renders no better results. Yet, "From 1995 to 1998, the most recent year for which national data are available, in vitro fertilization procedures increased by 37 percent, from about 59,000 to about 81,000, and the number of clinics rose by 28 percent, from 281 to 360." *See* Gina Kolata, "*Fertility, Inc.: Clinics Race to Lure Clients*," The New York Times, January 1, 2002.

review by this Court, especially since fundamental rights and important public policy are at issue.

III. CONTRACTUAL RELATIONS DO NOT TRUMP FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Contrary to Respondent's assertions, legislative creations, such as state-based contract laws, cannot compete against the Constitutionally protected parent-child liberty, privacy, and associational interests that "derive from blood relationship, state law sanction, and basic human right . . ." *Smith v Organization of Foster Families (OFFER)*, 431 US 816, 846 (1977). If the position of Respondent and the State of Washington is accepted, there will be a devastating effect on the parental rights of adoptive, IVF, and donor parents.

CONCLUSION

Review should be granted in this case.

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